

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9364

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FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH JUMBLATT'S TWO DEPUTIES

1. LUNCHEDED WITH JUMBLATT'S DEPUTY PARTY CHIEF ABBAS KHALAF AND FELLOW DRUZE CONFIDANT, FAWZI ABOU DIAB, AS PLANNED.

2. BOTH KHALAF AND ABOU DIAB HAVE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY DEGREES AND SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH. WHILE THEY ARE EASIER TO TALK TO THEIR POSITIONS ARE BASICALLY JUMBLATT'S, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO REFORM AND SYRIA'S ROLE HERE.

3. THE MEETING GAVE ME ONCE MORE THE CHANCE TO STRESS THE DANGER OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. IF THE TRUCE BECAME UNSTUCK, SYRIAN MILITARY ACTION COULD BE ALMOST IRRESISTIBLE AND THE CONSEQUENCES MOST DANGEROUS IN TERMS OF A POSSIBLE REGIONAL WAR. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT IN JUMBLATT'S INTEREST FOR THIS TO HEPPEN.THE SENSIBLE WAY TO AVOID IT WOULD BE FOR HIM TO ADOPT A MORE REALISTIC TIMETABLE FOR REFORM. CEASEFIRE IS TOO PRECIOUS TO SACRIFICE IT TO DEMANDS IMPOSSIBLE TO ATTAIN IN SHORT TIME.

4. FROM REMARKS MADE BY KHALAF, IT WAS CLEAR THAT
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THERE IS ROOM FOR COMPROMISE. ON THE OTHER HAND,

IT WAS EVEN MORE CLEAR THAT JUMBLATT IS NOT PREPARED TO GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO WHAT WAS AGREED ON LAST JANUARY 22. THUS, HOW FAR THE CHRISTIANS ARE PREPARED TO GO BEYOND JANUARY 22 AND HOW FAR JUMBLATT IS WILLING TO GO BACK TO JANUARY 22 ARE KEY QUESTIONS.

5. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, IN ANSWER TO SOME SPECIFIC QUESTIONS WE PUT TO HIM, KHALAF SAID THE FOLLOWING:

(A) JUMBLATT HAS 90 PERCENT CONTROL OF THE LEFTIST FORCES;

(B) WHILE JUMBLATT'S FORCES INITIATED FIGHTING ON APRIL 2 BEFORE THE MID-DAY DEADLINE, THEY DID NOT INITIATE ANY ACTION AFTER THE DEADLINE.

(C) IF A NEW PRESIDENT IS ELECTED AND IF FRANGIE RESIGNS, JUMBLATT WILL EXTEND THE CEASEFIRE (THIS A KEY POINT ON WHICH WE PRESSED AND IS IMPORTANT CONCESSION YET ONLY IF THERE IS FORWARD MOVEMENT ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE);

(D) KUMBLATT DOES NOT WANT A WEAK PRESIDENT.

6. CONSIDERING JUMBLATT'S ALMOST PATHEOLOGICAL SUSPICION THAT FRANGIE WOULD NOT RESIGN ONCE A NEW PRESIDENT WAS ELECTED, I INFORMED KHALAF AND ABOU DIAB THAT FRANGIE HAD TOLD ME PERSONALLY HE WOULD RESIGN IF A NEW PRESIDENT WAS ELECTED AND IN CONDITIONS OF SECURITY AND LEGALITY, I THOUGHT I HAD BETTER MENTION IT IN ORDER TO GET THEIRS AND JUMBLATT'S THINKING MOVING FORWARD.
BROWN

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